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ABSTRACT

Questions posed about the practicality of postsecondary education have led many institutions to survey the graduates themselves. The Southern Regional Education Board report cites studies conducted by the University of North Carolina and the Tennessee Higher Education Commission. The surveys concern the age of graduates, the type and amount of work while in school, financial support to students, activities, curriculum, employment rate and history, and value of the education. The implications of the results of the surveys are discussed in general. Higher education needs to gear itself more toward the older students who generally work while attending school; higher tuition levels will limit access to a number of potential students; extracurricular activities are an important part of college; students want more field experience and more options in developing degree programs; the potential economic return to the states is substantial and needs addressing; and students find college economically enriching, but even more personally enriching. Alumni followup studies are encouraged because they point out specific problems an institution may have as well as needed and desired changes. (JMF)

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A Measure of Academic Effectiveness

Following Up Graduates

The notion has persisted among Americans that college graduation confirms one's intellectual competence—presumably to be followed by professional success and personal happiness.

According to a 1973 Carnegie Commission report, the benefits of going to college far outstrip any advantages of not going in terms of learning, earning and, more than likely, getting the most out of life.

But unlike society's demands upon other institutions, higher education has seldom been called upon to substantiate any of these claims (or the illusions it may have encouraged) with tangible facts. There has been little urgency to measure the difference or to determine exactly the real meaning of higher education, i.e., what difference, if any, college really makes in the lives of its graduates.

To justify academic existence, the value of postsecondary education has been measured traditionally by an accounting of *resources* used rather than by *results* achieved. This statistical evidence—the number of library books, the ratio of faculty to students, the amount of research activity, etc.—has seemed to satisfy legislative funding powers, as well as the rest of society, on questions of academic quality.

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> "Those in higher education have cause to worry when the public questions whether mere institutionalization for several undergraduate years without clear measurement or evaluation can be presented as higher education. Integrity and candor are at stake, and so is the reputation of American higher education."
>
> *Steven Muller, President, Johns Hopkins University*

Times have changed.

The recession has shrunk allocations for academic activities; conversely, inflation has sent tuition and other educational costs spiraling. The traditional college-age student population is on the wane, and the projected enrollment slack will be tightened by a new group of older students with different needs than in the past.

Finally, somber manpower studies are reinforcing doubts of academic relevance with outlooks of a lopsided supply and demand, and warnings that graduates may not find employment in their fields of study, or that they may have to settle for jobs below their educational training and capacity—or that they may not find a job at all. At least not in the state where they were educated.

Last year *Newsweek* magazine contended that "most experts are persuaded that the straight economic argument against college is going to be valid for some time. They think that the traditional college education may never again hold out the automatic financial rewards, job security and upward mobility it once promised."

In its position statement on postsecondary priorities, the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) observes that "the forces on consumerism and the demand for economic efficiency require close attention to these issues. The academic community has within its own ranks the potential for self-generated reform" and, the priorities statement notes, "that reform should be based on a systematic assessment of educational outcomes and impact and should lead to improved faculty performance and productivity."

In light of this current climate, there are signs that higher education is beginning to look at those needs and ask if it is and how it is serving them.

"If the tax dollar is to be used to 'buy education,' as has been and is being done," writes one academic author, "society has a right to certain expectations."

Another adds: "Though we aca-

"We... must stand before the bar of public accountability."

demics tend to see ourselves primarily as consumers, by others we are seen...as the managers of one of the country's largest businesses, and we must, therefore, like other owners and managers, stand before the bar of public accountability . . ."

Measuring Success

There has never been a reliable or measurable determinant of educational value, despite the countless outside study committees and inside experts who have spent academic light years devoted to the task. Facts remain scarce and folklore endless.

And the questions posed today about the practicality of post-secondary study, surmise Tennessee education officials, "are salient questions the higher education community is ill-equipped to answer."

One way to get at some of the answers is to ask those whose lives were most affected by the educational process: the graduates themselves.

Time magazine made such an attempt in the late Forties, mailing questionnaires to nine thousand graduates, young and old, from over a thousand of the nation's colleges.

"What kind of breadwinners does college turn out, and what kind of citizens with what kind of political and social attitudes?

"Has their education made them happier or has it just made them restless?

"What happens to the 'A' students or to the 'C' and 'D' students, to the Big Men on Campus and to the wallflowers, to the boys who owned their own convertibles and the boys who had to wait on tables to earn their own board?

"What happens to the girl who went from college to a career, and to the girl who got married on graduation day?

"In short," *Time* asked, "is college really worth all the time and trouble?"

Time's conclusions varied and, in terms of background information, are worth the time and trouble to read.

Southern Studies...

Closer to home and in time, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission and the University of North Carolina, among some other Southern colleges and universities, recently tapped their graduates to find out how effectively the institutions were performing their professed roles.

Tennessee surveyed a representative sampling of 1974 graduates from every program and degree level in all its institutions. More than half the polled alumni responded. UNC sampled 1974 graduates from its 16 campuses, its response rate approximating 62 percent.

Tennessee's report of the findings "speaks boldly in many areas," signaling a number of "implications for higher education decision-making."

Similar to many studies, the following summary outlines those findings and their implications:

Age Forty percent of the undergraduate degrees were awarded to individuals twenty-five or older, thus supporting current reports on changing patterns of college attendance.

A re-examination of the type of student Tennessee higher education should be designed to serve is suggested.

Work At least 70 percent of all Tennessee public college graduates worked while in school, about half of them averaging over 20 hours a week.

Colleges and universities need to ask if class scheduling and student personnel services adequately serve the working student.

Support Even though many undergraduates worked, support from parents or relatives was the dominant source of financial support. Inflation continues to shrink the earning power of many Tennessee families. And financial reasons were the major cause for students having a break of more than one term in their degree program.

Attention needs to be directed to the point at which higher tuition costs will limit access.

Activities Graduate satisfaction with the college experience and their perceived growth in a number of areas were highly correlated with extra-curricular participation.

Extra-curricular activities are an important part of a college education and should continue to be encouraged.

Curriculum For the most part, graduates were satisfied with their majors, their overall degree programs and their preparation for work or additional schooling. They did, however, offer individual suggestions for curricular improvement.

Give us more "real life" experiences, they said, and make the curriculum more flexible. Graduates felt they needed more practical orientation in their courses and more "real world" experiences. Internships, student teaching and cooperative education were the ex-

"...countering presumptions with present-day facts."

pressed highlights of many college experiences.

Institutions need to consider providing opportunities for field experiences and more options in developing degree programs.

Careers The employment rate of graduates increases the higher the degree attainment. Not only are advanced degree holders employed, but also the overwhelming majority are working in their fields of preparation. Baccalaureate degree holders have a somewhat smaller percentage of success getting jobs.

"As a provider of manpower for the state, there is evidence Tennessee higher education is performing well," reported the Commission. "Even at the doctoral level, where graduates are more mobile, two-thirds of them are employed within the state, often in the communities where they attended school."

The potential economic return to the state of these graduates would seem to be substantial, and the Commission is addressing future research to this assumption.

Value The economic value to both the Tennessee college graduate and the state is obvious, but the study found that graduates feel there is more to college than vocational preparation or accumulating knowledge.

While unanimously agreeing that the most important and motivating forces for college attendance were educational or vocational in nature, the graduates found the greatest contribution of college to be their cultural growth in art, music, literature and an awareness of their culture and that of others.

These graduate responses should serve as a reminder that the college experience contributes to economic reward and vitality, but even more to a personal enrichment.

...And Results

Information gleaned from alumni follow-up data frequently indicates specific problems an institution may have—and may not see—in curricular or program areas, graduate school preparation or in career advisement.

• For example, two colleges in the region learned they were preparing more school teachers than the market could accommodate. As alternatives, one school chose to limit admissions to its college of education; the other advised students to incorporate additional studies into their educational programs, allowing them freedom to choose that course of study but also helping insure a wider career visibility.

• Follow-ups have also revealed common career dispositions among students who, because of insufficient information, were unaware of the variety of occupations they could enter with a particular major, and thus limited themselves in both choice and scope of job opportunities.

In their book *What Can I Do With A Major In...?* writers Malnig and Morrow suggest concentrating on jobs college graduates actually *did* enter rather than, as in most career guides or college bulletins, "indicating the kind of jobs students in various majors might logically expect to enter."

Re-adapting its college catalog to serve as a kind of educational and career prospectus, the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana feels satisfied that by countering those presumptions with present-day facts, its students could prepare for a more realistic future.

And for its prospective students, the college designed and sent to high school counselors "an extensive document with information about the campus one doesn't ordinarily find in college catalogs." Not only does the document detail listings of employment opportunities on campus, housing, financing, cultural outlets and student organizations, but also the "outcomes of graduates: the kinds of successes they had in their careers or graduate school, their scores on professional entrance examinations, and other information, such as graduate salaries and jobs according to major courses of study."

• The career development program is another means to counsel students. Born from follow-up results, a campus-wide counseling program at the University of Alabama at Birmingham guides students throughout their college years toward a sounder concept of career skills, as well as expectations.

• An area of current concern for most regional institutions is whether manpower requirements have changed in certain fields and if the college curriculum has kept pace with those new trends.

Quizzing its former education students and the principals of schools where those alumni are employed, Longwood College in Virginia found many working in the inner city, an area of preparation for which there had been little academic emphasis. There is now such a program on the Longwood campus.

On a larger scale, in 1973 the University of Kentucky College of Agriculture conducted a compre-

(continued on page 6)

Career Education vs. "Values Added"

Tracking down alumni from years past is often a near-impossible task, even for the closest-knit college families or the largest universities with strong financial and methological resources.

Those schools who have made surveys found it less frustrating to concentrate on their more recent graduates.

It has been argued, however, that the newly graduated are imperfect sources for opinion, being highly transitional at this particular stage in life, as well as lacking the hindsight only time and experience can give.

Regardless, their perceptions of college are valuable. They can answer some important and basic questions: whether they found a satisfactory job, whether it related to their courses of sutdy, and whether those courses helped or hindered them in their careers—or, in the case of graduate students, in their continued study.

Another contested issue in following up: with the mounting emphasis by today's culture on economic security there is, among current survey trends as well as subsequent academic tendencies, an inherent danger of concentrating too much on employment aspects and ignoring the harder-to-measure "values-added" benefits of college.

A debate on this issue occurred recently among members of the American Association for Higher Education whose conference theme *Help Wanted: Higher Education and the World of Work* brought together "the largest turnout in at least a decade," according to the *Chronicle of Higher Education*.

"If higher education continues to move in the direction of career preparation," argued Robert Schrank of the Ford Foundation, "it will deprive people of the very aspects of education that can make life more meaningful and satisfying."

But the new focus of career education by institutions of higher learning does not "dictate a movement from the curriculum of traditional liberal education or of instrumental general education," rebutted Noojin Walker, vice president for academic affairs at Pensacola Junior College. "The courses of study in the former remain intact; the humanistic concern in the latter remains paramount. But career education does require that we relate man's cultural and humanistic advancement to his work—to the occupations of the disciplines."

Despite the dichotomy of justifying college according to the world of work versus its traditional, liberal intent, higher education is living with and providing for both. Alumni opinions are important in this continued effort.

The follow-up study is not a remedy in itself. Nor are its findings necessarily directives for major policy implementation. It is, rather, one basis for change.

Generally, the questions in follow-up surveys are a package of three or four components. The underlying aim in each is to learn what influence—strengths and weaknesses—college had in particular stages of the students' lives.

Less detailed than the original questionnaires, the following sample is similar to that of the University of North Carolina and one currently considered by the state of Georgia.

ACADEMIC BACKGROUND

Please indicate your academic standing upon graduation:

_____ Mostly A's, some B's (3.5-4.0)
_____ Mostly B's, some A's (3.0-3.4)
_____ Mostly B's, some C's (2.5-2.9)
_____ Mostly C's, some B's (2.0-2.4)

Please indicate your combined (verbal and math) SAT scores:

_____ 400-600
_____ 600-800
_____ 800-1,000
_____ 1,000-1,200
_____ 1,200-1,400
_____ 1,400-1,600
_____ Did not take SAT's in high school

Your most recent degree or other award:

Awards or Certificates other than Associate Degree _____
Associate _____
Bachelor's _____
Master's _____
First Professional (MD, DDS, JD, etc.) _____
Ed. Spec. _____
Ph.D. _____

Major of your most recent degree or award _____

ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT

Please indicate with a check your overall satisfaction with your institution and your major:

Your Institution	Your Major	
_____	_____	Highly satisfied
_____	_____	Moderately satisfied
_____	_____	Dissatisfied
_____	_____	Very dissatisfied

Please indicate level of satisfaction on each of the following:

	Highly Satisfied	Moderately Satisfied	Dis-satisfied	Very Dis-satisfied
Overall instruction in courses of your major	_____	_____	_____	_____
The accessibility of instructors for conference or advisement	_____	_____	_____	_____
Academic guidance	_____	_____	_____	_____
Career guidance	_____	_____	_____	_____
The college placement office	_____	_____	_____	_____
The extent to which you were challenged by your overall education	_____	_____	_____	_____
The variety of course and/or program offerings	_____	_____	_____	_____
The availability of student activities and clubs	_____	_____	_____	_____
Your college experience as preparation for life	_____	_____	_____	_____

EMPLOYMENT

Are you presently employed?

Full Time? (30 hours or more) _____ Part Time? _____

Are you employed in the state? (By location of your main place of work.)

Yes _____ In what city and county? _____

No _____ In which state? _____

What is your present job title? _____

Briefly describe your job duties. _____

_____

_____

What principal product or service does your employer produce or provide? (Answer for the major division in which you are employed.)

_____

_____

How related is your job to your major field of study of your most recent degree?

Directly related _____

Somewhat related _____

Not related at all _____

If you took a job not directly related to your field, what was the main reason?

Could not find a job in my field _____

Better pay than a job in my field _____

Better opportunity for advancement than in my field _____

To see if I liked this kind of work _____

Did not want to work in my field _____

Other (Please specify) _____

Please rate your most recent program as preparation for your present job.

Very helpful _____ Helpful _____ Not helpful _____

How satisfied are you with your present job?

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Dis-satisfied
In terms of challenge?	_____	_____	_____
In terms of salary?	_____	_____	_____
In terms of long-range plans?	_____	_____	_____

How related is your current job to your anticipated, permanent career?

Very related and important to my career plans _____

Somewhat related _____

Not related at all to my long-range plans _____

How important has each of the following sources been in providing you with information about either your job or your anticipated career? (Check one for each source)

	Quite Important	Slightly Important	Not Important At All
Family and Friends	_____	_____	_____
Guidance Counselors	_____	_____	_____
Placement Officers	_____	_____	_____
College Faculty	_____	_____	_____
Actual Employment in the field of work	_____	_____	_____

UNEMPLOYMENT

What is your present activity?

Unemployed and actively seeking work _____

Unemployed and not seeking work _____

Not seeking employment because of health, family or other reasons _____

Other (please specify) _____

CONTINUING STUDY

What degree are you currently seeking?

Associate _____ Bachelor's _____ Master's _____

First Professional (MD,DDS,JD,etc.) _____ Ed. Spec. _____

Ph.D. _____

Other _____

Are you presently enrolled in a:

Public college or university in this state _____

Private college or university in this state _____

Public college or university outside of this state _____

Private college or university outside of this state _____

Proprietary school, either in this state or another state _____

Which of the following best describes your present major or program:

It is related to previous major _____

It is unrelated to previous major because:

It is difficult to find employment with previous major _____

I changed my interests _____

Other (please specify) _____

Indicate how well you feel your previous education prepared you for your present education program:

Excellent preparation _____

Good _____

Fair _____

Poor _____

Are you continuing your formal education to: (check one for each item)

	Strongly Agree	Agree with Reservations	Disagree with Reservations	Strongly Disagree
Satisfy job requirements?	_____	_____	_____	_____
Enter a prestigious occupation?	_____	_____	_____	_____
Increase earning power?	_____	_____	_____	_____
Contribute to change of society?	_____	_____	_____	_____

(If you have completed Sections A and C, you have finished. Please return these two sections to us in the enclosed stamped envelope.)

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS CONCERNING YOUR EDUCATION:

_____

_____

_____

_____

"Sensitivity to changing needs, and the flexibility to accommodate those needs must somehow be institutionalized within the system."

hensive program review and follow-up study "as if no program currently existed in the department.

"Many of our courses had been originally developed as early as the 1940's; several courses appearing in the catalog had not been taught on a regular basis for several years; others had only small annual enrollment," school administrators observe in their report to SREB.

"It was apparent that some areas of considerable importance were not being covered at all, or were not being addressed in sufficient depth. Furthermore, several external developments affecting the market for graduates and the currency of curricula had become apparent, which implied changes regarding the nature of demand for our agricultural economics graduates and the types of training which they need or want."

Among other means of research, follow-up questionnaires were sent to former students to determine their opinions of the school's programs. The college also enlisted similar comments from its graduates' employers.

"Too often," the research committee officials report, "professors or department heads assume that they know best what should be in the curriculum and how it should be presented, without bothering to research the market...And today's students are demanding more *a priori* information concerning what they can expect 'to learn' from a course or program of study, and how this knowledge can be useful to them."

As a consequence of the survey, courses and programs are being restructured in two separate but mutually supportive directions: a greater flexibility in emphasis allowing the student to pursue studies of particular interest, and a reorientation of emphasis to accommodate and satisfy job skill requirements, such as studies in oral and written communication and other areas not previously associated with agricultural study.

The need for close career counseling was also revealed through the survey, and one of the results is a seminar that advises graduating seniors of the potential employment range, the nature and requirements of various jobs. The seminar emphasizes the preparation of job applications and vitae, as well as experience in appearing before groups, participating in interviews and preparing and presenting research reports.

"We must develop a system for on-going review and evaluation of program effectiveness to insure that within a few years we do not again become 'set in our ways,'" the report continues. "Sensitivity to changing needs, and the flexibility to accommodate those needs must somehow be institutionalized within the system."

That same sensitivity to changing needs has prompted Georgia to enlist participation of its public and private institutions in a survey of this spring's graduates.

This fall the state intends to track the relationship between the 1977 graduates' major courses of study in college and their present careers or, if those students are enrolled in graduate school, their continuing studies. The survey also will ask whether or not graduates felt academically and sufficiently prepared for their jobs or for further study—two good measures for the institutional self-assessments which will follow.

The statewide survey is a cooperative effort by the Georgia Department of Labor, the Board of Regents, the Southern Regional Education Board, and the participating institutions—all sharing responsibilities, processing and funding.

Georgia will standardize its survey with assistance and suggestions from those institutions concerning form content.

Economy and central processing of the responses are other good reasons for mutual participation, as well as for standardization.

"The coordinated effort will reduce the cost substantially, primarily because of the savings afforded by centralized data processing, printing and report preparation," predicts Eva Galambos, survey project director for SREB.

"Moreover, the use of standard questions for all participating institutions will yield a great deal of information on the jobs that graduates find in various majors," Dr. Galambos adds. "While an individual institution may not produce enough graduates in a specific major, the data on all graduates in the state with that major should provide valuable job market information that will aid current students as they plan their studies."

Summaries of any individual institution's responses are to be made available only to that institution. Anonymity of graduates' responses, as well as the institution's responses, is guaranteed, says Dr. Galambos. "However, a statewide summary will incorporate total results for all responding graduates and offer more job market information—by majors—than would be possible for any single institution's graduates."

A novel aspect of this effort is the involvement of a state department of labor with the higher edu-

cational institutions in conducting a follow-up survey. The labor agency's interest derives from its need to know more about the supply of labor in the state: who is coming out with what degrees, taking what kind of jobs, staying in-state, and how does this supply compare with occupational openings?

The Department of Labor's potential and experience in data processing, in coding responses on occupations, and capabilities for printing forms constitute a ready-made resource to obtain data useful both to the state agency in manpower planning and to educational institutions.

Regional Survey Proposed

Last year SREB polled 496 Southern college and university presidents, asking about follow-up activities they may have participated in or planned, and seeking opinions on the feasibility of a similar but regional effort with technical assistance from SREB.

Replies from the institutions to the SREB letter revealed a surprising amount of graduate surveys already underway or anticipated. Eighty-three of the 258 responding institutions reported some sort of follow-up activity; most, however, had limited the numbers of graduates polled and questions asked. And those reports which had been summarized varied greatly in ground covered.

There is much interest expressed in the kind of regional involvement which would facilitate the process mechanically as well as one whereby institutions could obtain more cross-comparisons of results without giving up anonymity.

SREB is continuing to study such a regional possibility. □

News From The Region

Believed to originate in childhood, heart attacks and high blood pressure are the leading causes of death in the United States and "are considered to be of epidemic proportions," says LSU professor of medicine Dr. Gerald A. Berenson. To continue study of histories of the related diseases and to prevent their progression, the **Louisiana State University Medical Center** recently received a $5.5 million, five-year research grant from HEW's National Institutes of Health.

University of Virginia professors report they have a new subject of study: other university professors. Part-time faculty members, the subject of this new research, represent one-third of the U.S. post-secondary faculty. "Many institutions of higher education will rely more heavily on part-time faculty in the future, so it's important that a comprehensive description of these faculty members and the existing policies regarding their positions be made," says Dr. David W. Leslie, UVA associate professor of education and principal investigator of the project.

The study will be funded through a $79,000 grant from the Exxon Education Foundation and conducted by UVA's Center for the Study of Higher Education.

Aided by a $230,000 grant from Lilly Endowment, Inc., a first grade program for area children will begin in September at **Berry College** in Georgia. Part of the school's comprehensive early childhood program, it will emphasize individualized learning, among other techniques.

Nursing students will be aided through a three-year, $276,000 HEW grant at Georgia's **Albany State College.** According to Patricia L. Starck, nursing division chairperson and director of the new project, the grant "will offer remedial help and individualized instruction. Funds will be used additionally to promote cultural enrichment and increase self-esteem through the collegiate experience."

Two professional schools at **The College of William and Mary** in Virginia have created a joint course of international business operations which its professors describe as "the first of its kind in the country."

"Businessmen and lawyers are typically different breeds, but in the world of international business operations, they must necessarily work closely together," says law professor Walter L. Williams, Jr., co-creator of the course with business professor Jesse S. Tarleton.

The graduate-level study will enable future business executives and lawyers to work together on "real world" problems similar to those they will face after graduation.

The Primary Care Education Program of the **Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions** has received a two-year, $62,000 grant from the National Fund for Medical Education to determine what settings provide the educational elements for a well-rounded primary care curriculum. The study is of particular importance because Johns Hopkins has elected not to embark on a family practice program but to educate general internists, pediatricians, and obstetrician-gynecologists in continuous, life-long, health-care monitoring of their patients.

"Rather than expand the role of the physician," says Dr. Robert M. Politizer, project director, "we think that primary care should use

an interdisciplinary team approach, for no one discipline can teach all there is to know about delivering good primary care.

"Involvement of nurse practitioners, nurse midwives, public health nurses, and other health professionals, will provide valuable information on the educational effectiveness of health care teams," Politizer believes.

The **U. of Texas** at Austin and the **U. of North Carolina** at Chapel Hill are two of 10 universities in the nation receiving $20,000 grants from the Rockefeller Foundation to help support promising doctoral students in American art history of the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries.

Researching the nation's energy problems, universities are receiving increased financial boosting from private and public funding sectors.

Five **U. of Georgia** scientists have been awarded a federal grant to continue their studies on the best method of raising trees as an energy source.

Engineers from 14 regional universities are working under National Science Foundation grants totaling $313,900, to study the economic effects of the increased use of solar energy on utilities. Institutions involved in the effort are in the states of Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia.

And conducting major energy policy studies is among tasks of the **U. of Texas** at Austin Center for Energy Studies with funds from the Exxon USA Foundation and Exxon Education Foundation. The 3-year grant amounts to $206,000.

For Further Reading

Information on publications listed below may be obtained through author or publisher:

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"Who Needs College?", Merrill Sheils, Henry McGee, Frederick V. Boyd, Sylvester Monroe, *Newsweek*, April 26, 1976.

Note: Regional Spotlight is issued quarterly during each academic year. The articles are created by the writer-editor with the assistance of persons knowledgeable in the field being treated. Newspaper, magazine and periodical editors are invited to use the material here in whole or in part. When SREB material is used, please provide a sample copy of the issue in which it appears to the Board, addressed to the writer-editor's attention.

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